

THIS MAN

A PLAY

Written to mark the
Consecration of the
new Cathedral of the
Diocese of Melanesia at Honiara
in the Solomon Islands.

by

FRANCIS BUGOTU

and TONY HUGHES



THE AUTHORS

The play was written by Francis Bogotu, with the collaboration of Tony Hughes, an officer in the Administration of the Protectorate. Mr. Bogotu is a lecturer on the staff of Kukum Teachers' College, Honiara. He was educated in the Solomons, New Zealand and England.

Play for Cathedral Consecration

Introduction by the Bishop of Melanesia

the Rt. Revd.
John Chisholm,
who writes
about the play
which was written
to mark the
occasion of the
Consecration of
the new Cathedral
of St. Barnabas
in Honiara,

I hope the new Cathedral will be a place of worship and a great cultural centre. To that end the local repertory group is to produce a morality play written by a Melanesian.

The play is about the clash of Western culture and their own, and it could be thought too shocking to be performed in the Cathedral, because in it the Melanesians have expressed their deepest thoughts. Some may say the Church has failed because it has not given the people the answer, but I feel it is full of hope because the people can see the problems, and there is no paternalism.

They have their own problems, and they are searching for the answers themselves. It is better than for me, as Bishop, to say, "This is the way, walk in it."

I have asked ABM to publish the play, so that people in Australia can see that life on the islands is not just waving palms and coral sands. I feel that people all over the world will be interested in this first product of Melanesian literature.

THIS MAN

SCENE: In front of the altar of the new cathedral.

The stage is in complete darkness. Silently and quickly, the actors take their places. A drum beats a loud, mournful, tragic beat.

Spotlight up slowly on Man. He sits on his haunches, chin in hand. He is wearing town clothes, carrying "Time" magazine, folded in his hand.

Drum beats on, steadily, sadly.

Man rises, turns his back on audience, walks slowly towards altar. Drum loud, double beat.

Man leaps round, full spotlight on him, throws high his hands and begins his opening speech. Throughout the speech there is only the spotlight on Man.

Who Are We?

I am looking for myself;
I am looking for a man who will answer to my name,
So I can see what sort of man,
How big he is, how brown or black,
What language does he speak, what clothes he wears,
What goes on inside his head,
Whom does he love or hate—
I am looking for that man
Who is me.

Sometimes I want to fight—bam! bam!
Whom shall I fight?—no enemies.
Sometimes I want to love—ah, love!
Whom shall I love? Nobody wants me for a lover.

And sometimes I think I float above the town,
To watch myself hang around,
Story here, drink there, work today, sleep tonight,
So I think,—who is that stonehead in the long pants?
Is it me?

And I'm not the only one—
Plenty of us, walking, laughing,
Putting on the style.
But in the quiet hours of the morning,
When we wake before the dawn,
Thinking—who are we?

We are the ones who do not know;
But we need to find out soon,
For tomorrow we ourselves have sons to teach.

*Our mothers and our fathers
Came from the forest hills,
Came from the island villages
And from the ocean shore.*





When we are born, they hope that we shall grow
Like them—no, like their fathers,
Wise in the ways of islands,
Of gardening and fishing
And happy to be living
In that home.

But we have seen a different way,
We have heard a different tune,
We have turned our backs on old things
And have opened up our minds
To receive the junk and rubbish
Of a new and foreign way.

I have opened up my mind
Like a giant rubbish-can
And have welcomed into it
Everything the European throws away.

In there among the rubbish
Are the good and useful things,
But how to recognise them from the trash?

For our fathers did not tell us
And our mothers did not know
What makes the new way stronger than the old;
While our mothers never told us
And our fathers never knew
How to choose the good and leave the bad aside.

So—who are we?
We are the modern people,
We are the new time men,
Our houses are of concrete,
We have electric light,
The library is open
And we can read and write.

We can read in world newspapers
About the brotherhood of man—
And are these our true black brothers
In the slums of America?

Or shall we call these brothers,
Murdering, raping nuns in Africa?
But are these our true white brothers
Making bombs and rocket ware,



Burning villages and children
Like our own?

O—the library is open
And I can read and write,
But what I read is driving me insane!

Towards the end of the opening speech, lights go up on full stage, slowly. There is a blast of noise at the word "insane".

From left the New Chorus enters. The music is taped, full-blast Beatles or R. and B., very loud, shaking the cathedral. The dance routine should be fast, jerky, passionate and violent.

The dancers scoop up Man, a girl takes him, seducing him into the New Way. The success of this sequence depends on the violence of the music and the skill with which the dancers can interpret the theme.

As the New Dance reaches its close, Man and the girl who took him whirl off from the main group. Man's shirt is torn, he sweats freely. As the music dies, he sinks dazed and exhausted to the ground. The girl stands looking, then pokes him with her foot and laughs loud, jeeringly into the air; then she turns and runs off, with the other dancers, all laughing.



The drum begins again its loud, menacing, tragic beat. Man lies, on the steps of the sanctuary, beaten. Stage lights fade. Soft spot on him.

A guitar picks out the melody of Walkabout Long Chinatown, clear, floating melody.

Man rises slowly, and walks. Spot on him. Some rubbish, beer bottles, bucket. He takes off his shoes and drops them in rubbish can.

Man walks, stooped, smoking cigarette.

He comes upon a dirty, decrepit Old Man.

He stands and stares at him; he gives him his shirt, wrapping it round the old man and, half-turning to the audience, begins his second speech:

Where have they gone? Where have they gone, Olo?
Where are the people of your time?
The gardens are empty, Olo,
The people have gone to the town.
The dancing is finished, Olo,
The men's house is broken and gone.

The hills are silent, Olo,
The pipes and the drums are dead.
The canoes are rotting, Olo,
The axeheads are heaped in the bush.
The people are gone, Olo,
And only the ghosts remain.

But why have they gone?
Why have they left us alone?
What happened here in our fathers' land, to drive them
away?

What terrible sickness came?
Nothing like that, Olo,
But only the passing of time.
The new way came to them, Olo,
And they could not understand.
They tried fighting it, Olo,
But they could not win the fight.
They tried imitating it, Olo,
And it made them sick with shame.

O, where have they gone, Olo?
Can only the ghosts remain?
What was it like, Olo,
When you were young and strong?
Tell me, where have they gone, Olo,
That I may follow them there!

*As the speech ends, the Old Man points a bent finger off stage.
Drum beats, rapidly, urgently. Enter, from the darkness, the Old
Dancers. Their dance is a story, to pan pipes and the shell anklet
rhythm.*

Man is deeply moved, watching, alone.

The Old Dance ends and the dancers move off.

Man moves thoughtfully to centre of stage. Spot on him.

Drum beats insistently.

*The Girl reappears and stands, alone, beautiful. The Old Man
squats, the shirt wrapped round him, on the opposite side of the
stage. They are just on the edge of the light.*

Man looks at them slowly in turn; the drum beats on.

Man faces the audience, and begins his third and final speech:

Shall I live?



I see an old life, I see a new life;
Where is my life?
The new life is all around me,
I hate it but I want it,
See the dresses getting shorter,
Moving up the thigh, tantalising me and tempting,
But never daring
To be like my mother in her bare-breasted and bare-
buttocked grace,
For that would be an ancient honesty *she* could not
bear.

See the the lipstick and the pretty pretty face,
But look into those eyes and you only see
A mirror of your stupid self.

The offices are full of my brothers pushing paper,
While the gardens and the hills stand without people,
And the places of our fathers are the homes of forest
birds.

The sweet new life surrounds me
Like the lollies that make rotten the white teeth of our
children.

God has a dream, and in his dream we live;
He dreams me, as I walk and think.
The same God dreamed my father,
Who walked far into those blue hills,
Where from the top he touched the stars,
And heard the music of the people in the sky.
The forest was his home, the trees his friends.
His dead lived on around, to help him, and to be
remembered
In solemn sacrifice.

He believed in God, his magic God,
As I can never now believe.
And in his faith he knew the cool sweet
Wind that blows down from the mountains on the lucky
ones.

Shall I live now, in narrow bitter ways,
That never hear the music of the stars,
Nor smell the river's coldness in the morning,
Nor see the stormy eye of God upon the darkening
sea?
No—I will not leave these things,
My father knew them once, and I will find them too.

But—if she comes again, can I keep my hands off her?
No. If she comes again, I must take her.
For the music comes into my legs and stomach.
Her touch stops my poor brain with blood.
Although she is the new thing that I hate,
I want her.

O here in me they meet, the old and the new!
Two rivers rush together, boiling in the crazy whirlpool
of my mind!
O God, if you are dreaming me, dream on!
Do not awake, and waking, throw away this helpless
dream.
Dream on, O God, and I will find a way,
I will, I will, I will!

As this speech ends, from both sides together the Old Dancers and New Dancers come racing in, leaping at Man, who falls to the ground. They leap over him. Music is the rock and roll of New Dance and custom music of Old Dance played simultaneously at full blast. The awful noise is symbolic of the awful confusion of Man's mind.

As the leaping, deafening noise ends, the dancers disappear, all lights go out, stage in complete darkness as before.



